UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* Security Council establishes transitional administration and peace-keeping operation for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium; also authorizes UN military observers to continue monitoring demilitarization of Prevlaka Peninsula for another three months.

* Secretary-General says a continuing pattern of disparity between responsibilities and resources would doom United Nations to repeated failure.

* A total ban on production and export of land-mines only way to deal with their devastating effects, according to Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs.

* Committee on Elimination of Discrimination against Women opens fifteenth session; to consider human rights of women in Rwanda and reports of eight countries.

* UNHCR Sadako Ogata to chair meeting to solve the problem of 2 million refugees and displaced persons from former Yugoslavia.

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The Security Council today decided to establish a transitional administration and peace-keeping operation to help with the demilitarization and eventual peaceful reintegration of Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium into Croatia. Acting under Chapter VII of the Charter, the Council decided, by unanimously adopting resolution (1037) 1996, to establish the operation for an initial 12-month period.

The Mission will be known as the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Branja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES), as referred to in the Basic Agreement on the region signed last November by the Croatian Government and local Serbs. It will initially deploy 5,000 troops. Member States, acting nationally or through regional organizations, may take all necessary measures, including close air support, to defend or help the Mission withdraw.

(more)

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The Council also requested that UNTAES and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) led International Implementation Force (IFOR) cooperate with each other. The Secretary-General will appoint a Transitional Administrator who will have overall authority over the Mission.

The Council also decided that the region's demilitarization, as provided for in the Agreement, will be completed 30 days after the Secretary-General informs it of UNTAES' military deployment. It will review whether the parties have shown a willingness to implement the Basic Agreement no later than 14 days after the date demilitarization is due to be completed. The Council will reconsider the Mission's mandate if the Secretary-General reports that the parties have significantly failed to comply with their obligations under the Agreement.

In another action, the Council also authorized United Nations military observers to continue monitoring demilitarization of Prevlaka Peninsula for another three months.

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Mandates given to the United Nations must be clear, realistic and backed by human and material resources, according to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. Speaking at the University of Oxford, today, he said nothing could be more detrimental than to permit a continuing pattern of disparity between responsibilities and resources that would doom the United Nations to repeated failure. He had taken every conceivable step to acquire urgently needed funds and supported a wide variety of financial measures to deal with the UN's cash flow problem. None of those proposals had been adopted.

The Secretary-General said he had carried out stringent budget-cutting measures, including reduction in the number of Secretariat posts, curtailment of travel, support for an inspector general for internal oversight, and consolidation of thirteen offices into three departments. The cuts had succeeded but the scale of possible savings was tiny in relation to the magnitude of the crisis. The financial gymnastics which he had undertaken could not be maintained. He said that as the immediate financial emergency was addressed and system-wide reform pursued, it was time to seriously address the need for a United Nations that could operate on a secure and steady independent financial foundation.

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A total band on the production, export and use of land mines is the only way to deal with their devastation, according to the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Peter Hansen. Speaking to correspondents at Headquarters today, he said there had been a great deal of talk about technical fixes, and of the difference between "bad mines" waiting to blow up a citizens and the so-called "good mines" which could self destruct. That was not a solution as so-called smart bombs still caused an enormous danger to civilians many years after fighting had ended.

Mr. Hansen said 69 countries were now littered with land-mines. Estimates of 10,000 people killed a year were probably low, as many victims were unaccountered for. The United Nations land-mine programmes removed 100,000 mines a year, but more than 2 million more were added annually at a cost of $500 a piece to remove. Even if the use of land-mines was stopped today, there would still be great costs involved in treating the hundreds of amputees for many years. He said now that an American, two British and six Swedish soldiers serving with the Implementation Force (IFOR) in the former Yugoslavia had been killed by land-mines, the international community's attention might be concentrated on the issue.

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The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women will consider the human rights of women in Rwanda during its three-week session beginning today at United Nations Headquarters. The 23-member Committee of experts is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which was adopted in 1979. It will discuss the reports of eight States parties and the results of the Fourth World Conference on Women, which urged universal ratification of the Convention by the year 2000.

Addressing the opening session, the Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, Nitin Desai, told the Committee it could play a key role in linking implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and implementation of the Convention.

Countries which have ratified or acceded to the Convention must submit a national report, initially within one year of signing, and then at least every four years, on measures to ensure women's equal participation in their countries' political, social and cultural life. The Committee has adopted general recommendations covering such issues as women's economic position, the impact of structural adjustment policies, maternity leave, and measures taken to allow women to combine child-bearing with employment and violence against women.

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The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, will chair a meeting of the Humanitarian Issues Working Group of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia in Geneva tomorrow. A United Nations spokesman said the one-day meeting would focus on solutions to deal with the more than two million people forced from their homes by the war in the former Yugoslavia.

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